NOVEMBER 2004

TRANSREPORT

TRANSPORTATION NEWS FROM THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Functional Completion of Route 3 North Project

On October 25, the $385 million Route 3 North widening project reached a major construction milestone. This 21-mile roadway now has three lanes open to traffic in each direction all the way from Interstate 95 (Route 128) in Burlington to the New Hampshire border. During the past several months, incremental sections of roadway were opened to traffic in the final, six-lane configuration. This last section was for the eight miles southbound from Interstate 495 to Route 62.

The project includes both capacity and traffic safety improvements along Route 3 North, including the addition of a third travel lane to both the northbound and southbound sides. All 45 bridge structures in the corridor were replaced as part of the project. Thirteen interchanges

ITS cables installed along Route 3

meet current design standards. New two-lane collector/distributor roadways were built at the interchanges of Route 3 North with Interstate 495 and Route 110 to improve safety and operations on the busiest sections of Route 3 North.

■ Route 3 North *cont. on p. 3*

Red Sox World Series victory parade along Boylston Street

Red Sox World Series Parade-Goers Take the T

On Saturday, October 30, millions of fans packed the seven-mile route of the Red Sox World Series victory parade. Estimated to be the largest crowd ever to gather in Boston, the fans cheered the world champions, who traveled in amphibious vehicles along the route that stretched from Fenway Park, through downtown Boston, and onto the Charles River.

The City of Boston estimated the crowd at 3.2 million, based on the depth of the crowd and the length of the route; the estimate took into account fans leaving Boylston Street to watch the procession a second time along the Charles River.

The MBTA estimated that one million people used the public transit system to see the parade, based on observations at stations and a count of vehicles entering MBTA parking lots and garages. The average MBTA ridership on a weekend day is 600,000.

In preparation for the parade, the MBTA placed fences near key stops to control the flow of passengers; modified several bus routes; increased commuter rail service; added commuter boat trips to and from Quincy; and increased the frequency of trains on the Red, Orange, Green, and Blue Lines. Some trolleys were diverted from the E branch to add more trains on the B, C, and D branches, where there was more demand.

Contrary to concerns that Green Line stations would be overwhelmed and would need to be closed, no stations had to be closed due to overcrowding.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

MPO activities update 2
Highway sound barrier policy 2
Noise barrier in Dedham 3
Tobin Bridge construction 3
Tamper-resistant driver's license . . . 3
Meeting calendar 4

The members of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO): Executive Office of Transportation • City of Boston • City of Everett • City of Newton • City of Salem • Federal Highway Administration • Federal Transit Administration • Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority • Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Advisory Board • Massachusetts Highway Department • Massachusetts Port Authority • Massachusetts Turnpike Authority • Metropolitan Area Planning Council • Regional Transportation Advisory Council • Town of Bedford • Town of Framingham • Town of Hopkinton

Boston Region MPO Activities

Boston Region MPO Action Items

In October the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization approved the following Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) work programs:

- A feasibility study for a proposed extension of the Bruce N. Freeman Memorial Path in Sudbury and Framingham – The purpose of this study is to determine the feasibility of constructing a rail trail on 4.8 miles of right-of-way in Framingham and Sudbury that, until recently, were an active freight line.
- Silver Line Phase II Before-and-After Study – CTPS will collect and process information on ridership on the Silver Line Phase II bus rapid transit service and compare the actual performance of the new service with performance predictions in terms of ridership volumes, ridership sources, and revenue.
- 2005 MBTA Fare-Mix Study – The objective of this study is to estimate fiscal year 2005 average fares by mode and fare category and use the results in conjunction with revenue data to develop ridership estimates.
- 2004–2005 Route I-93 North and Southeast Expressway High-Occupancy-Vehicle (HOV) Lane Monitoring – Since 1998 the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has required monitoring of the HOV and general-purpose lanes on Route I-93 North and the Southeast Expressway to determine the air quality benefits associated with the HOV lanes. The work program provides for the continuation of this process.
- Technical Assistance to Massport for Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006.

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Update

The October Advisory Council meeting was led by the new chair, Jeffrey Levine, who is the Inner Core representative to the Council and the 32nd chair of the Council.

The meeting featured a briefing and discussion on the MBTA's new automated-fare-collection (AFC) system by Stephen A. Berrang, MBTA assistant general manager and AFC project director. AFC, one of the four components of the MBTA's new Station Management Program, will eliminate tokens and will provide many improvements and efficiencies for riders and for the transit system.

MBTA customers will soon be able to purchase new magnetic tickets and "smart cards" at any one of 490 locations, ranging from full-service booths to fare vending machines. The smart cards may be used on subways, the Green Line, buses, trackless trolleys, and the Silver Line. AFC is scheduled for full implementation by the fall of 2006. In addition, collectors and inspectors will become "customer service agents/station attendants."

The November Council meeting will feature a MetroFuture Visioning Session conducted by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT) Update

The new RIDE (paratransit) service contracts took effect November 1. In early October, an entirely new and more user-friendly RIDE Guide was mailed to 60,000 customers in various formats, including large print, braille, and audio compact disc (CD). The new guide describes many service improvements, including new personnel training and testing standards, installation of new state-of-the-art paratransit computer and communication systems to improve scheduling and dispatching capabilities, phasing out the current ticket system with a new electronic fare system, 69 new RIDE vans, and preparation for the delivery of 174 new RIDE sedans.

New MassHighway Sound Barrier Policy

On September 28 Secretary of Transportation Daniel A. Grabauskas and MassHighway Commissioner John Cogliano announced a new sound barrier construction policy to address the concerns of neighborhoods affected by noise from adjacent highways. "This new policy is a good-faith effort to try to minimize highway noise for homes and residents that abut certain highways," said Secretary Grabauskas.

The new policy applies to the Type II noise abatement program, one of two MassHighway noise abatement programs. Type I barriers are associated with projects that widen a roadway or add vehicle capacity. If a certain decibel threshold is exceeded and the barrier is determined to be reasonable and feasible, then MassHighway will construct a barrier. Type II barriers are constructed on a voluntary basis by the Highway Department.

In 1989, a list was compiled of 53 priority locations for Type II barriers. In the fifteen years since then, only four of the voluntary barriers were constructed. The new policy calls for at least two Type II sound barriers to be advertised for construction each year. MassHighway is looking at the feasibility of sound barrier construction at some of the Type II priority locations in order to determine which locations will receive attention in the next few years.

MassHighway's priority is to construct projects that address the needs of existing infrastructure, such as the repair or replacement of structurally deficient bridges, substandard roadways, and dangerous intersections, before funding new infrastructure. Building sound barriers at all of the 53 Type II locations would cost more than $100 million; the new sound barrier policy strikes a balance with highway safety needs.

"The bulk of our funding should and will continue to go toward projects that enhance highway safety," said Secretary Grabauskas. "But we are also cognizant of the fact that highway traffic noise is a quality-of-life and a statewide issue."

■ Route 3 North *cont. from p. 1*

The project also includes intelligent transportation systems (ITS) such as closed-circuit television coverage, two weather stations, two weigh-in-motion stations, and four overhead variable-message signs. Another 11 roadways that cross above or below Route 3 were realigned, rebuilt, or repaved during the construction.

Route 3 North serves office and industrial parks along its length, as well as commuter trips to and from Route 128 and Interstate 495. During the past 30 years, traffic on Route 3 North has doubled, while the highway remained only two lanes wide in each direction. At the highway's busiest section, north of Route 129 in Chelmsford, average weekday traffic volumes rose from 48,000 in 1970 to 106,000 in 2000. Prior to this construction project, Route 3 North was one of three remaining heavily congested, four-lane, limited-access highways in the Boston region. The other two are Route 128 in Peabody and Danvers, and Route 3 South.

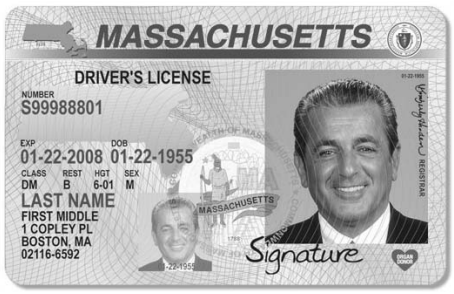
Even though the roadway now has three lanes in each direction, various lane restrictions for additional work in the shoulder and access-ramp areas along the corridor will continue.

MBTA Begins Noise Barrier Construction in Dedham

MBTA General Manager Michael Mulhern joined state and local officials at the groundbreaking for a noise mitigation barrier along commuter rail tracks in the Readville/Manor area of Dedham. This location was rated the second-worst of 59 locations along the Northeast Corridor that were evaluated in a 1999 Noise Mitigation Prioritization Study.

The noise barrier project involves the installation of a 1,500-linear-foot sound-absorptive barrier. Additional work will include electrical and drainage modifications, clearing of the area, modifications to the existing chain-link fence, and landscaping. The project will be completed in the summer of 2005.

New Tamper-Resistant Massachusetts Driver s License



On October 20 Governor Mitt Romney unveiled a new, tamper-resistant Massachusetts driver's license that will help to curb identity theft.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, from 2002 to 2003 the number of identity theft victims in Massachusetts grew 40%, from 2,597 to 3,634 victims. In 2003 Massachusetts ranked 21st in the nation in the number of identity theft victims per capita, and 3.1% of Massachusetts's victims were impersonated with forged driver's licenses, 1% higher than the national average.

Both the new license and the new non-driver identification card introduced November 1 contain many security features for reducing fraud. Massachusetts will be the first state to use a hologram-like Kinegram security feature for driver's licenses. The Kinegram, located at the center of the new license, displays unique characteristics when it is viewed from various angles. Other improvements to the card are not visible to the naked eye, such as microprinting and ultraviolet images.

Congress is already moving to standardize the documentation required to get a driver's license, in response to recommendations made by the September 11th Commission. The Commonwealth is looking into developing more rigorous standards to determine the authenticity of a person's documentation provided when applying for a driver's license. The governor noted that the rollout of the new licenses is the first step in a comprehensive process to make the new licenses as secure as possible.

Correction

Due to a reporting error in the October 2004 issue of TRANSREPORT, the article "Environmental Oversight Committee Addresses Open-Space Issues" incorrectly states that no party has taken final responsibility for the development of the Rose Kennedy Greenway's Parcel 14, which runs along State Street to the Boston Marriott Hotel in the Wharf District, and that the Island Alliance has decided not to go forward with its plans for the site.

In fact, the Island Alliance is anticipating the design and construction of a Harbor Park Pavilion on that site and is spearheading an effort to raise funds for it. Working closely with the National Park Service and other partners of the Boston Harbor Islands National Park area, the Alliance envisions a 2,400-square-foot structure that will house an information station, bookstore, café, and shop, and restrooms. The Pavilion will provide information on the harbor islands and other tourist attractions in Boston, and will serve as a natural gateway to the harbor and the islands.

Tobin Bridge Gets New Surface on Upper Level

The Tobin Memorial Bridge, spanning the Mystic River between Charlestown and Chelsea, is undergoing major construction on its upper level. Roadway improvements on the two-level, 54-year-old bridge began in October. The project involves milling, repaving, and restriping of the southbound lanes where they approach the toll plaza.

Two of the three lanes on the upper deck will be open daily from 7:00 A.M. until 7:00 P.M. During off-peak travel times, from 7:00 P.M. until 5:00 A.M., only one of these lanes will be open. Construction work will progress from the left to the right lane. Motorists are directed to use the Fifth Street on-ramp during right-lane construction, when the Everett Street on-ramp will be closed.

The Tobin Bridge carries 65,000 vehicles a day, has a 2.25-mile span, and sits 135 feet above sea level. It is vulnerable to corrosive ocean salt, as well as to the damaging elements of New England weather. As a consequence, the bridge requires constant maintenance, such as roadway repairs and repainting.

Meeting Calendar

The public is welcome to attend the following transportation-related meetings. A photo ID is usually required for access to meeting sites.

At the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Wednesday, November 10
Regional Transportation Advisory Council 3:00 P.M.
Conference Room 4

Monday, November 15
MBTA Rider Oversight Committee 11:00 A.M.
MBTA Board Room, Third Floor

Tuesday, November 16
Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT) 1:00 P.M.
Conference Room 4

Wednesday, November 17
MBTA Bikes and Transit Advisory Committee 1:00 P.M.
MBTA Planning Department
Room 5750

Thursday, November 18
Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee Meeting 10:00 A.M.
CTPS Conference Room, Suite 2150

Thursday, December 2
Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee Work Session 10:00 A.M.
CTPS Conference Room, Suite 2150

Call (617) 222-5179 for date and meeting room
MBTA Board of Directors 1:00 P.M.

At Other Boston Area Locations

Friday, November 5
Move Massachusetts Membership Meeting 8:10 A.M.
Brown Rudnack Berlack Israels
18th Floor, One Financial Center, Boston
(RSVP and photo ID required. Contact Dan Wilson at [617] 720-4334 or at danwilson@usa.net.)

Wednesday, November 17
MBTA Public Meeting: Beyond-Lechmere Northwest Corridor Planning Project 4:00 P.M.
Tufts University
Dowling Hall, Room 745
Boston Avenue, Medford
(Transit-accessible by MBTA bus Route #94 or #96, with connections to the Red Line at Davis Station. To request assistive listening devices or interpreters for this meeting, contact Joe Cosgrove of the MBTA at [617] 222-4400.)

Friday, November 19
Metropolitan Area Planning Council Fall Meeting: Smart Growth Discussion by Secretaries Doug Foy and Ranch Kimball 8:00 A.M.
Suffolk University Law School
120 Tremont Street, Boston

Saturday, November 20
Green Futures/Urban Ecology Conference: Urban Rivers and Their Neighborhoods 8:30 A.M.
International Institute of Culinary Arts
Great Hall
100 Rock Street, Fall River
(RSVP to Cassie O'Connor at [617] 552-0938 or at oconnoev@bc.edu)

Meeting dates and times are subject to change: please call (617) 973-7119 for confirmation. Additional transportation meetings open to the public are listed on the Boston Region MPO Web site, www.bostonmpo.org.

Draft MBTA Capital Investment Program

Each year, the MBTA develops a five-year Capital Investment Program (CIP), which invests in infrastructure and new vehicles in order to maintain, modernize, and expand the transit system. The draft fiscal years 2005–2010 CIP will be available on the MBTA Web site on November 19. The MBTA will be holding public hearings during the public comment period, which ends December 31. Information on the public hearings is available online at www.bostonmpo.org and www.mbta.com.

TRANSREPORT

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TRANSREPORT is available in accessible formats to people with disabilities. Contact the Central Transportation Planning Staff Certification Activities Group at (617) 973-7119 (voice), (617) 973-7089 (TTY), (617) 973-8855 (fax), or publicinformation@bostonmpo.org.

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